

Georgia's Transportation Enhancement (TE) Program

TE Project Eligibility

The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) created the Transportation Enhancement (TE) Program. Ten percent of the funds within the Surface Transportation Program (STP) of the Federal-aid Highway Program are reserved for the TE Program. Subsequent Federal legislation has made minor changes in the TE Program and it remains a permanent part of the Federal aid Highway Program. Projects implemented under the TE Program must be one or more of the following activities:

1. Provision of facilities for pedestrians and bicycles
2. Provision of safety and educational activities for pedestrians and bicycles
3. Acquisition of scenic easements and scenic or historic sites including historic battlefields
4. Scenic or historic highway programs including the provision of tourist and welcome center facilities
5. Landscaping and other scenic beautification
6. Historic preservation
7. Rehabilitation and operation of historic transportation buildings, structures, or facilities including historic railroad facilities and canals
8. Preservation of abandoned railway corridors including the conversion and use thereof for pedestrian or bicycle trails
9. Inventory, control and removal of outdoor advertising
10. Archaeological planning and research
11. Environmental mitigation to address water pollution due to highway runoff or reduce vehicle-caused wildlife mortality while maintaining habitat connectivity
12. Establishment of transportation museums

A project to be funded by the TE Program must meet two basic conditions:

1. The proposed action must be one of the activities listed above, and
2. The proposed action must be related to the surface transportation system.

TE is a Reimbursement Program

A TE project must meet the requirements of the Federal-aid transportation program as if it were a typical highway project. This is a function of the TE Program's enabling legislation and Federal funding source. Prompt attention to each of the necessary steps will assure that each project is completed in a timely manner.

For funding purposes, all transportation projects are divided into three phases:

1. Preliminary Engineering (PE) - pre-construction work items such as planning studies, environmental documentation, design plans, right-of-way plans, and construction bid documents
2. Right-of-Way (ROW) – property acquisition
3. Construction (CST) – project implementation

Federal funds available under the TE Program will pay up to 80 percent of the total project cost. The Sponsor's local match must be at least 20 percent of the total project cost. The local match may be cash, in-kind services, or donated services, materials, or real property. The federal TE funding award may be used in any or all of the three project phases of preliminary engineering, right-of-way, and construction. Most Sponsors use their own funds to complete the preliminary engineering and right-of-way phases and use the TE funds for construction. The Department encourages this approach as it simplifies the project management process the Sponsor must follow.

Since the TE award amount may be less than the amount requested in the TE Application, it is possible that the Sponsor may need to exclude some aspects of the originally proposed project. This circumstance requires development of a revised scope of work for the project, which will be reviewed and approved by GDOT. The amount of federal TE funds allocated to each project is fixed and will not be increased. The Sponsor is responsible for any costs in excess of the awarded TE amount needed to develop and complete the approved project.

Remember, this is not a grant. The federal TE funds are allocated as part of the Federal-aid highway program. Federal funds are made available to projects on a cost reimbursable basis, i.e., the Sponsor must incur the expense before Federal TE funds are paid to the Sponsor.

How Does My Community Compete for TE Funds?

Funds from the TE Program are awarded by GDOT through a competitive "Call for Projects" process. The State Transportation Board Member serving your Congressional District makes the final selections and determines the funding level for each selected project. Partial funding of your project is likely given the limited funds.

The following highlights key steps that may improve your community's ability to compete for these funds:

- 1) Identify an eligible project. See the list of 12 items considered eligible. We suggest you focus your attention and efforts on a single project.

- 2) Secure a project "Sponsor". GDOT contracts with governmental agencies (state and local), universities, and authorities created via the General Assembly. All of these can be a project "Sponsor". If you aren't one of these, you will need one of these entities to agree to serve as your project's "Sponsor". This is a very serious responsibility. GDOT will hold the Sponsor responsible for the project and for ensuring all Federal and State requirements are met.
- 3) Identify how you will provide the local match. Federal funds can cover up to 80% of the project cost, but you are responsible for the remainder.
- 4) Study the materials on the GDOT TE Website. The Sponsor Manual is a comprehensive tool that contains the information you will need to manage your project. You will also find information that could help you meet your local funding match requirement.
- 5) Monitor the website for GDOT's announcement of the next "Call for Projects". As the next "Call" approaches, you will notice that materials being updated, revised, or replaced. It is likely that even the TE Application used for the last "Call" will undergo some changes. An updated version of the web-based TE Application will be posted prior to GDOT announcing the next "Call".
- 6) GDOT will offer Applicant workshops for those considering submission of an Application. Plan on attending. The more you know, the better your Application will be. Remember, the project selection process is competitive. There are always more good projects than there is available funding.
- 7) Plan ahead, prepare your Application, and submit it in accordance with the schedule and procedures that will be posted on the TE website.

The next "Call for Projects" is tentatively scheduled for the Spring of 2007. Watch the TE Website for details.